



City of Santa Barbara Creeks Restoration/Water Quality Improvement Report to the Community 2003



Old Mission Creek Bioswale at Bohnett Park

Our mission is to improve the health of our creeks and ocean through storm water and urban runoff pollution reduction, creek restoration, and community information and participation programs.



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Introduction

Welcome to the 2003 report to the community on the progress of the Creeks Restoration and Water Quality Improvement Division (Creeks Division) to improve creek and ocean water quality and restore natural creek systems. This report details a range of achievements from the completion of the restoration of Old Mission Creek at Bohnett Park to the expansion of community outreach programs, and new grants for water quality and creek restoration projects. It also discusses the ongoing implementation of daily programs that reduce pollution, such as creek clean-ups, water quality monitoring, street sweeping, and enforcement. Key to the success of these programs is coordination and collaboration between Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Community Development, Fire and other city departments, as well as with the County of Santa Barbara Project Clean Water, community organizations, and Santa Barbara residents, businesses, and neighborhood associations.

As the Creeks Division enters its fourth year, we expect to complete a number of exciting projects. The most significant include the restoration of the Arroyo Burro Estuary and the installation of an ultraviolet facility to treat polluted urban runoff before it enters Old Mission Creek. Hands-on neighborhood creek improvement opportunities and a community-based watershed planning process will also further connect and encourage Santa Barbara residents to participate in our programs. Over the long term, widespread community participation will be critical to achieving clean water and sustaining healthy creeks.

2003 Revenues and Expenditures

The Creeks Division is primarily funded through a voter-approved 2% tax on visitor stays in local hotels (Measure B). In Calendar Year 2003, the Creeks Division Fund received \$2 million from Measure B. These funds were supplemented by interest income of \$96,000 and grant appropriations of \$650,000. Overall, \$2.7 million in new funds became available for projects and programs.



Of over \$1.6 million in program expenditures, approximately 66% was invested in clean water activities, 23% in creek restoration projects, and 11% in community outreach and education efforts. A reserve of \$1.3 million is set aside for ongoing and future creek restoration and storm water treatment projects.

Granting Agencies – Each year the Creeks Division seeks other sources of funds to leverage Measure B revenue. In 2003, our creek restoration and water quality projects benefited from grant funds received from the California Resources Agency, State Coastal Conservancy, State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Department of Parks and Recreation Proposition 12 Per Capita and Riparian and Riverine Grant programs.

Clean Water Programs and Capital Projects



Water Quality Report Released – The first baseline report of water quality in city storm drains, creeks and coastal ocean was completed in December 2003. Posted on the Creeks Division web page, the report highlights bacteria hot spots on Arroyo Burro, Mission and Sycamore Creeks. It also reveals that bacterial pollution can vary greatly, and that high levels in the ocean are not always linked to creek and lagoon water quality. Although this report provides good baseline information about the state of our creeks, our next step in 2004 will be to conduct DNA research to determine the different sources of bacteria.

Creek Cleanups Increased – During 2003, seventy-two days of clean-ups yielded **94,680 pounds** (or 47 tons) of debris. This represents a **42 percent increase over 2002** and a 77 percent increase over 2001. These increases are due primarily to two factors – increasing human use of the creeks and augmented cleanup resources. As a result, many areas are re-cleaned each week. Large items most frequently collected include bicycles (83), grocery carts (124 – up from 29 in 2002), and mattresses (42). Other items include appliances, bottles, cans, carpet remnants, clothing, feces, furniture, miscellaneous trash, and yard waste.

Trash Cans Installed – Creek cleanups were supplemented by the installation of **38 new garbage cans** placed in key bridge areas next to creeks. Installed due to ongoing litter and dumping problems, the cans are serviced on a weekly basis. Although they help to reduce litter in the creeks, the next challenge is to reduce the use of the areas around the trash cans for illegal dumping of televisions, computers, bagged garbage, and containers of hazardous materials.

Street Sweeping Expanded – In October 2003, the Public Works Department expanded residential street sweeping from the Westside/Downtown neighborhoods to include areas of the Eastside. Over the course of the year, the program covered **3,172 street curb miles** and collected approximately **1,389 cubic yards of debris**.



Storm Drain Filters Maintained – Over 100 storm drain filters in the State Street, Cabrillo and Eastside areas are maintained regularly by the Streets Division in order to keep polluted debris out of the storm drains and creeks. Our efforts to identify new locations and pilot study new filters will lead to additional filter installations in the lower Westside neighborhood and other areas in 2004.

Urban Runoff Enforcement – Enforcement of the City’s storm water rules **increased by 40% from 2001 to 2003**. In 2003, in preparation for the development of a clean water business assistance and certification program, a greater focus was placed on the automotive repair and service industry. Enforcement calls for other sectors such as restaurants, construction, commercial/industrial areas, and private residences decreased overall from 2002 to 2003. We estimate that this decrease may be due to ongoing education and outreach efforts, and dry weather winter conditions.

Model Facility Improvements at the Corporation Annex Yard – A number of facility improvements were completed at the Corporation Annex Yard on Yanonali Street. Designed to eliminate polluted runoff from entering Laguna Channel, they included two storm water filters and a catch basin filter, improved vehicle wash facilities, an oil/water separator, and secure storage for hazardous materials. These improvements help the city meet federal clean water regulations, and serve as a model for public and private operations yards.



Arroyo Burro and Mission Creek Clean Beaches Initiative Projects Underway – In 2003 we made substantial progress on the selection, conceptual design and permitting for three summer urban runoff projects. Selected due to known high levels of bacteria and poor creek water quality, and funded in part through a State Water Resources Control Board Clean Beaches Initiative Grant, the purpose of these projects is **to remove or treat polluted dry weather urban runoff** prior to discharge into Arroyo Burro and Mission Creeks. They include:

Diversion of urban runoff away from the creek: Water from two storm drains, one at Hope Avenue (Arroyo Burro) and a second at Haley Street (Mission Creek), will be diverted to the sanitary sewer and treated at the El Estero Wastewater Treatment Facility.

Treatment of urban runoff: The Westside storm drain will be retrofitted with an ultraviolet light facility to clean the water before it enters Old Mission Creek at Bohnett Park.



Storm Water Management Program – The proposed citywide storm water management program (SWMP) was submitted in July 2003 as the first step to comply with the Phase II National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulations of the Federal Clean Water Act. Coordinated by the Public Works Department, the SWMP describes how the City will comply with new federal clean water regulations through enforcement of runoff pollution rules, construction site runoff management, storm water management requirements for new development, pollution prevention plans for City facilities, and public education and community participation.

Creek Restoration Projects and Programs

Restoration of Old Mission Creek at Bohnett Park Completed!

December 2003 marked the completion of the construction of the restoration of Old Mission Creek at Bohnett Park. This project combines our creek restoration and water quality goals with passive recreation and improved access for Westside residents. Improvements include repaired creek banks, water filtration bioswales, 4,000 riparian plants and trees, stone creek crossings and new trails.



Educational and community participation in the restoration project began with a planting day in November, and expanded to include school field trips, tours, and after school programs. The project also serves as a demonstration of restoration techniques.



Native Plant Nursery – The City's native plant nursery was used to grow over **4,000 plants** for the restoration of Old Mission Creek at Bohnett Park. The nursery will next be used to grow plants for the restoration of the Arroyo Burro and neighborhood creek side replanting projects.



Watershed Action Plans soon to be underway for Arroyo Burro, Mission and Sycamore – With new funding allocations in the fiscal year 2004 budget, the development of watershed plans became a high priority for the Creeks Division and its citizen advisory committee. Beginning in 2004 the development of these plans will occur in three phases.

The first phase will document existing conditions and management of the land, water, and biotic resources of each watershed. The second phase will include a community input process involving watershed residents and businesses, public agencies, elected officials, and community organizations to determine the purpose and role of the plans. In the third phase, the watershed actions plans will be developed based on the results of the first two phases.

Design for the Restoration of the Arroyo Burro Estuary – With the assistance of the Creeks Advisory Committee, Douglas Family Preserve Advisory Committee, Park and Recreation Commission, County of Santa Barbara Parks Department and Arroyo Burro residents, we completed the technical studies and preliminary design for the restoration of the Arroyo Burro Estuary.

The project, funded by Measure B and a grant from the State Coastal Conservancy, includes removing Mesa Creek from the culvert, increasing estuary and riparian habitat, building a fish ladder at the Cliff Drive Bridge, and creating a footbridge and new trail connection to the Douglas Family Preserve.



Restoration Alliance Activities – We continue to participate in and provide technical assistance to a range of community restoration and water quality alliances including the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, Santa Barbara County Weed Management Area, Mission Creek Restoration Partnership, Steelhead Advisory Committee, California Coastal Coalition, and For Sake of the Salmon. In addition, we provided education and technical assistance to the Arroyo Burro Vision Group which is developing a vision document for the Arroyo Burro watershed.

Creek Stewards – In fall 2003 we began to formulate a new creek stewards program. This program will identify and implement creek beautification projects with the assistance of neighborhood residents and creek side landowners. Some areas, to be pursued in spring and summer 2004, include Mission Creek near Oak Park and Sycamore Creek from Carpinteria Street to Punta Gorda. As part of these projects, the Creeks Division will provide native plants and help coordinate creek improvement activities.



Community Outreach Projects and Programs

Sbcreeks.com Launched – The Creeks Division website, launched in early 2003, provides community members with straightforward access to information about our programs, community events, creek cleanup and enforcement activity, advisory committee meetings, and other documents. The site is also used by youth developing school projects as well as people outside the community seeking more information about our programs. Continually updated, we recently posted detailed watershed maps that can be easily downloaded and printed.



Watershed Education Reached 3,600 Youth – In 2003 elementary-age youth education programs such as field trips to the South Coast Watershed Resource Center, hands-on demonstrations, and creek walks, taught children about the importance of clean water and how to prevent pollution. With current participation from 28 Santa Barbara city and regional schools, it is hoped that these programs, conducted by City staff, the Community Environmental Council, and Growing Solutions, will expand to include new classes and more children in 2004.

In a new program focused on 7th and 8th graders and conducted in collaboration with UCSB's Youth Enrichment Adventure program, over 30 students interested in water quality issues, creek restoration, and riverine ecosystems are using the Old Mission Creek restoration as a learning laboratory.

Community Events – Community events are a great way to meet and talk with Santa Barbara residents and visitors. Each year we participate in the Earth Day festival at the county courthouse sunken gardens and coordinate Creek Week with the County Project Clean Water program.

In 2003, our Creek Week activities included the Annual Water Quality Forum, a clean-up of Sycamore Creek, and a tour and creek clean-up of Old Mission Creek at Bohnett Park.



One of our most successful events was the community planting day for the restoration of Old Mission Creek at Bohnett Park. About 50 area residents, including young and older community volunteers, dug holes, planted over 200 native plants, and spread mulch. Children also created handmade signs asking park visitors to take care around the new plants.

What creek is this? Sign Program Initiated – In response to the lack of knowledge about the names of our creeks and the fact that they flow into the ocean, the Creeks Division initiated a sign program in 2003. First focused on bridges that cross creeks in residential and commercial areas, these signs will be installed in summer 2004. The program will expand over time to include interpretative signs in parks and at lagoons on city beaches. In addition to gaining familiarity with the names of our creeks, it is hoped that the signage will reduce dumping and increase stewardship.

New Spanish Media Campaign – In a new step for reaching Santa Barbara's Spanish speaking population, television and radio PSAs were developed in collaboration with CityTV and the County of Santa Barbara Project Clean Water program. Broadcast for a number of months on Univision and local radio stations, the topics included general awareness about creek and ocean pollution and its impacts. This campaign will be bilingual in 2004 and expand to include bus signs.



Clean Water Business Program Started – The first phase of the clean water business certification program began with automotive service and repair businesses. Developed in collaboration with the local chapter of the Automotive Service Council, businesses volunteer for an inspection to determine whether their practices contribute to water pollution problems. Businesses that pass the inspection, or make the necessary corrections to pass a re-inspection, are certified. The certification will include window stickers identifying the business as a Clean Water Business and recognition in a paid advertisement. The next phase of the program will include other businesses such as restaurants and construction companies.

Community Collaborations - Working with the Community Services Program of the Recreation Division, we are sponsoring several plots at the Yanonali and Rancheria community gardens to develop native plant workshops and programs for neighborhood youth and local schools. The



native plants will be used to teach science concepts, and will then be incorporated into creek restoration projects in the community.

Also in cooperation with the Santa Barbara Housing Authority and UC Cooperative Extension, we are combining community creek restoration and youth education programs focused on Old Mission Creek in the West Figueroa area. Initiated in 2003, these efforts will be key components of our neighborhood outreach programs in 2004.

Opportunities and Challenges in 2004

While many of our programs continue each year, we also work with community members and our advisory committees to identify new projects that can help tackle pollution problems. As we enter 2004, some of the exciting projects as well as some of the ongoing challenges include:

- ✓ ***Sponsoring DNA studies to research the sources of bacterial pollution in our creeks.*** One of the biggest challenges is that we do not know which bacteria are the most harmful. With DNA studies, we will first look for human sources and other animals, such as dogs and birds.
- ✓ ***Building a storm water detention basin at the Santa Barbara Golf Club.*** Storm water pollution is difficult to control because rainwater washes the many pollutants that collect on streets, residential neighborhoods and commercial areas, into our creeks. The new detention basin will naturally treat storm water before it enters Las Positas Creek.
- ✓ ***Completing the restoration of the Arroyo Burro Estuary and Mesa Creek.*** Removing creeks from pipes is an important strategy for improving water quality. We hope that opening Mesa Creek from its culvert, planting new vegetation, and expanding habitat in the estuary will improve water quality in the estuary and coastal ocean.
- ✓ ***Initiating a community design process for restoration of the City's Las Positas Valley parcel.*** A first step is to gather input and ideas from Las Positas Valley and other city residents.
- ✓ ***Developing watershed action plans for Arroyo Burro, Mission Creek and Sycamore Creek.*** Such plans will help Santa Barbara determine, as a community, our long range goals for restoring our creeks and improving water quality.
- ✓ ***Constructing the ultraviolet light facility to treat polluted urban runoff and storm water in the Westside Storm Drain.*** This project will directly treat bacteria and other pollutants in the storm drain in order to improve water quality in Old Mission Creek during summer months.
- ✓ ***Working with neighbors, Westside Advisory Committee, and the Santa Barbara Housing Authority to design community restoration options for Old Mission Creek at West Figueroa.*** With this project we to hope to expand community stewardship through the ongoing restoration of Old Mission Creek.
- ✓ ***Participating in the Eastside Neighborhood Project.*** As part of a neighborhood revitalization effort, we will be collaborating with the Eastside Study Group, Santa Barbara Beautiful, Santa Barbara Police Department, Growing Solutions, and others to improve a section of Sycamore Creek at Cacique Street.
- ✓ ***Installing creek name signs at key locations throughout the city.*** Each creek is part of a city neighborhood. Signs will help create a sense of place and acknowledge our creeks.
- ✓ ***Expanding the Clean Water Business Certification Program*** to construction businesses, restaurants and other business enterprises within the city.

Commitment to Community Participation

In December 2000, the City Council established the Creeks Restoration/Water Quality Program Citizen Advisory Committee (Creeks Committee) to advise City Staff, the Park and Recreation Commission, and the City Council on creek restoration and water quality programs funded by Measure B.

The Creeks Committee meets on one Wednesday of each month at 5:30 pm in the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room at 630 Garden Street. Members of the public are encouraged to attend the meetings to address items on the agenda and make suggestions for future discussion items. The meetings are also broadcast and replayed on City TV's Channel 18. The meeting schedule for 2004, and the monthly agendas and packet information, are posted at www.sbcreeks.com.

In 2003, the Creeks Committee reviewed and made recommendations on a number of issues, including the annual budget, key water quality projects, storm water management programs, education strategies, creek restoration designs and watershed plans.

Current Members of the Creeks Committee

Cameron Benson, *Ocean User*

Mike Hackett, Vice Chair, *Environmental/Land Use*

Linda Hughes, *Community At Large*

Daniel Wilson, *Business Community*

Steve Fort, *Environmental/Land Use*

Daniel Hochman, Chair, *Hotel/Lodging Industry*

David Pritchett, *Environmental/Land Use*

Dale Zurawski, *Environmental/Land Use*

Liaisons

Robert Almy, *County Project Clean Water*

John Jostes, *Planning Commission*

Margie Niehaus, *Park and Recreation Commission*

Iya Falcone, *City Council*

Das Williams, *City Council* (Alternate)

Creeks Restoration/Water Quality Improvement Division

Creeks Restoration/Water Quality Improvement Division staff is actively engaged in a range of projects that seek community input and involvement. In addition to community events, site tours, workshops, planting days, Creek Week activities, and after school programs, we are always available to meet and work with community groups, residents and business associations.

Staff and Office Location

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